

P.R.M.O. No. 9 Midland Region.

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NEWPORT (SALOP) URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.
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I N T E R I M R E P O R T

-of the-

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

-on the-

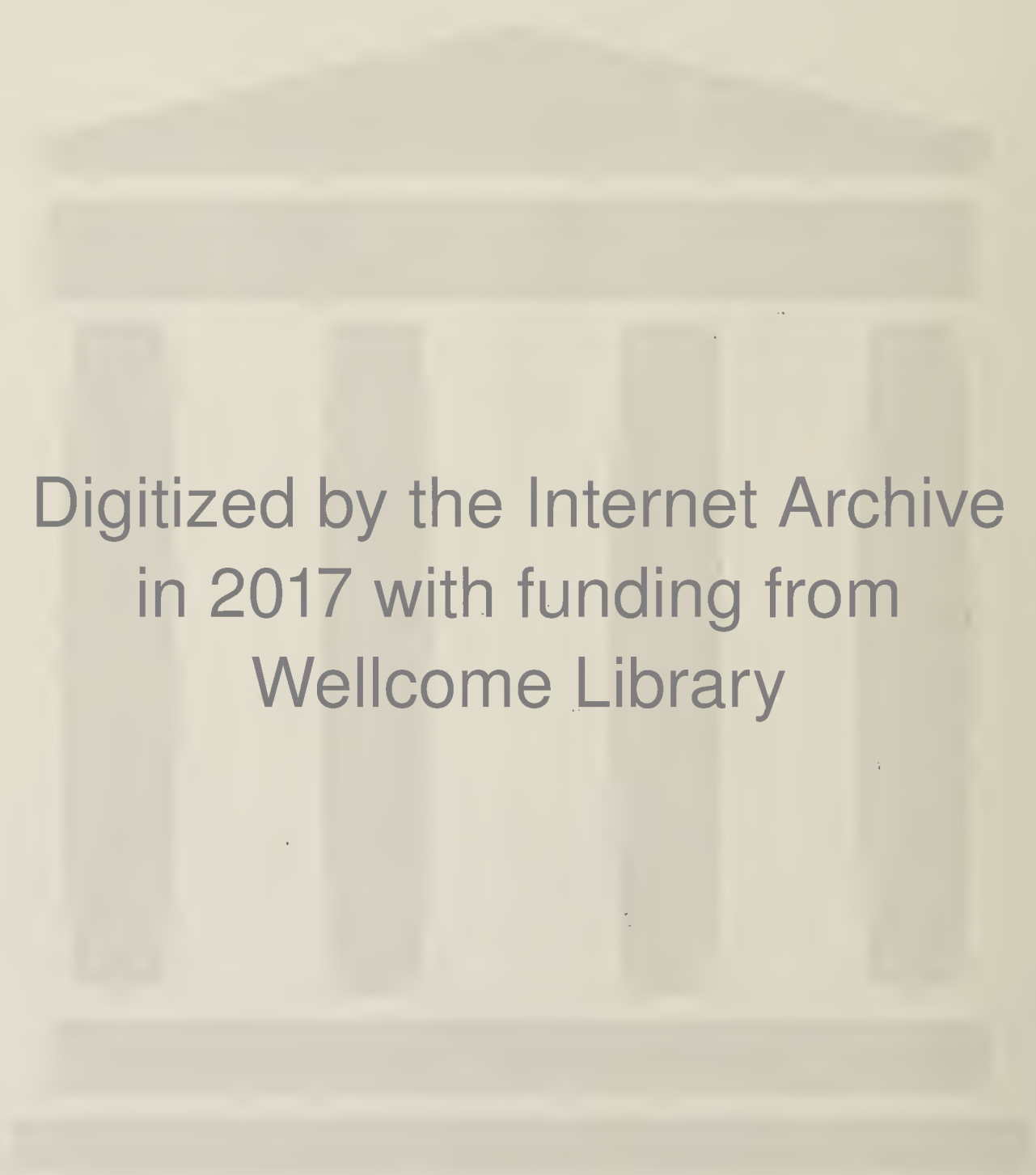
HEALTH AND SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES.

-For -

1940



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Interim Report on the Health and Sanitary Circumstances
of the Urban District of Newport for the Year 1940.

The end of 1940 saw the completion of the first year passed entirely under war conditions. So far as hygiene was concerned efforts were directed to maintaining the standard of health service reached in the later years of the thirties.

Orders concerned with National Emergency Control demanded prompt attention and had to be given precedence over other matters and much of your Sanitary Inspector's time was thus occupied. In his capacity, controlling the dual office of Surveyor and Sanitary Inspector, he was responsible for Air Raid Precautionary Work, Fire Service, certain aspects of Food Administration and, in addition, such branches of administration of main services as would function should damage arise as the result of enemy action. These works entailed some organisation not always able to be carried out in normal hours. It is fortunate that the relaxation of progressive health enterprise has allowed, not only a maintenance of a good standard of hygiene but also these additional duties to be carried out satisfactorily.

I take this opportunity of thanking the Sanitary Inspector for his collaboration during the year.

POPULATION. It will be remembered that in September 1939 under the Official Billetting scheme some 600 school children were evacuated from the Birmingham district and were accommodated in the Town and its surrounds. In addition to Housing, these children were given educational facilities by an interworking with the local schools and a high degree of collaboration was achieved. Although the majority of these children returned to their Town homes during the year enough was seen of this undertaking to appreciate the possibilities of such co-operation and the beneficial effects on child life.

Both during and subsequent to the departure of those concerned under the official scheme there has been a constant demand for housing and lodgings. Persons employed in local factories, voluntary evacuees, some through necessity, others following military movement, and civil servants have joined in the trek to the district. This has led to a considerable rise in resident population which has been increased by

about one third, and leaves the Town with little surplus available lodging. Despite the increase in labour available work is still plentiful and the local industries are kept going at maximum pressure. While there are no Military camps in the Town the close proximity to these is reflected in the constant movement of uniform in the streets of the Town where the Services come for the entertainment and recreation offered.

EMERGENCY HEALTH LABORATORY. This is now fully established in Wellington and has become an integral part of the health administrative. Advantage is taken of this convenience by the local Practitioners who are enabled to have minor bacteriological specimens examined with much saving of time.

AMBULANCE FACILITIES. So far as the health services are concerned the principal ambulance service is provided through the isolation hospital. This in practice functions well and it is rare that the ambulance in the Town has to be called for Duty.

WATER SUPPLY. The Town is fortunate in having an adequate supply of good quality. Bacteriological examinations have been made at regular intervals and the analyst's reports have been uniformly good. At the end of the year Chlorination was required by a Ministry of Health's Order and steps were taken immediately to secure the installation of the requisite machinery. This additional safeguard to the consumer has made no noticeable change in the potability of the supply.

To provide for an auxiliary supply to be available in the event of damage to plant or mains preliminary investigations have been made of the existing bore-hole at the local timber yard. This has been found to be of good quantity and from analysis reports have shown that the standard of purity is high. Maintenance has been considered and a good stock of auxiliary fittings are in hand.

SCAVENGING. A regular weekly collection has been able to be carried out, No change from the use of horse drawn vehicles has been made, and, fortunately no difficulty has been experienced in securing adequate labour.

At the refuse disposal works the problem of rat disposal has been placed in the hands of the County Officer.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL. No new sewers have been laid and the existing disposal works, which were under consideration for reconstruction at the beginning of the war, has had to meet the extra call occasioned by the large increase of population. Apart from minor complaints made concerning the method of dealing with storm overflow no incidents have occurred at this site.

The difficulties which can arise where two authorities abut in close proximity to urban life has been instanced in the case of this authority and another. The existence suburban dwellings having no connection with their adjoining town's sewage system and carrying out their disposal by means of several localised septic tanks is to be deprecated. The coupling up of these houses with the town's main services must be one of the first measures to be put into force when a return is made to normal conditions. This Town has in hand the extension of the existing sewer to the boundary line and it is hoped to be completed shortly. This will allow the neighbouring authority to extend their service without hindrance.

HOUSING. No new houses have been built in the area. Nevertheless, every effort to secure such repairs as were possible with the limited labour and material available has been made. Notice has been taken of facilities to license condemned houses still standing and, of the cases considered, four have been granted where conditions were such as to be likely to cause no detriment to the health of the occupants.

In the course of his duty the Sanitary Inspector has noted that generally there has been an upward trend in the maintenance of property in the new housing estates by tenants moved from condemned properties. There is however still need for improvement in certain parts, particularly in the Broomfield Estate.

A few cases of overcrowding have been brought to notice but as these have been of a minor type it is felt that the present conditions make this unavoidable.

No cases of tenants charging exorbitant rents to persons seeking rooms in lodgings have been reported.

MEAT AND FOOD CONTROL. With the centralisation of slaughtering the Town has become the nucleus of supply for the neighbourhood. A local slaughter-house has been requisitioned as a abattoir and all killing takes place on these premises. The inspection and examination of all carcasses is under the care of the Sanitary Inspector, who makes regular visits.

The local weekly market helps to maintain a regular supply of fresh vegetables and home produce to the district. In this way, by the increased consumption of these and home grown fruits the lack of imported fruits and the supply of vitamin they contained is compensated.

During the year no cases of Food poisoning were brought to notice but it will be necessary, with bulk food replacing what was formerly contained in tins, to keep stricter supervision over such commodities.

As a means of distribution a local canteen run on voluntary principals, has been established in the town centre and is for the convenience of the Services. This has been well patronised and fills a much felt want. In addition, another undertaking of a similar nature is centred at the local engineering works. This is primarily for the use of the employees there, but, in addition, it serves the needs of the civil defence organisations.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE. 1940 was the first year when a complete annual return could be obtained of notifications for measles and whooping-cough. Fortunately neither disease was common and there was no approach to epidemic conditions. About twelve cases of measles were brought to notice while whooping-cough was practically absent.

In the case of Diphtheria there was a rise of frequency-seven cases being notified. This gives a high ratio for a circumscribed area of this nature and better results should be able to be obtained with the present high prophylactic efficiency. Our aim must be to have every child under sixteen years of age protected.

Scarlet Fever, on the other hand, showed a satisfactory decline.

Pneumonia gave rise to the same number of cases as in 1939. There was a marked variation from the normal in the number of cases of puerperal fever notified there being a distinct rise. This might be ascribed to a simple variation from the mean, as may occur, or it may be that the present emergency conditions with their associations have played a part. Such factors as anxiety, reduced feeding or the movement of expectant mothers from their usual home surroundings must always be taken into consideration in assessing this matter and it will be of interest to note the returns of the County as a whole, when these are available.

The diseases usually associated with war and emergency conditions were absent, no cases of cerebro-spinal fever or enteric being notified. There was not considered any necessity to offer prophylaxis for the typhoid group of fevers although this is available and could be put into practice at short notice.

Few cases of Tuberculosis were added to the list and cases moving into the district from the bombed areas were infrequent.

In the early days of evacuation when the official billeting scheme was in force a number of cases of contagious illness were brought to notice. This group of diseases included impetigo and particular awareness of this condition arose from the necessity of close collaboration, under the scheme, between local practitioners and the Health Authority. The incidence of impetigo has fallen but the continued presence of the common associate virus - scabies - has caused some concern. This ailment has shown a rise widespread over the Country and the reason for this has been ascribed to various causes none of which have been proved conclusively. Amongst the factors which have been cited are, movement of population, of troops and the present tendency to overcrowding. It has been felt that facilities for adequate treatment, which under peacetime conditions would have been carried out in the home are of paramount importance and it is satisfactory to note that the County Authority have taken this matter in hand.

W. A. M. STEWART,

Medical Officer of Health.

29th. July, 1941.

NEWPORT (SALOP) U.I.